

Crops, Soils and Fertilizers

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THE FARM LABOR PROBLEM.

Valuable Suggestions Made in an Address by T. B. Parker, of Hillsboro, N. C., Before Farmers' State Convention, August 3, 1904.

In my opinion no one thing has contributed more to the demoralized condition of present day labor than the tenant system as inaugurated immediately after the war and which is still in vogue in some sections with all its original imperfections and objectionable features. Do not understand me to condemn the tenant system in its entirety, for I think under certain conditions and under the proper guidance and oversight of the master it is often the best system of farming that could be inaugurated for both landlord and tenant. This system quite often causes the tenant to take an interest in his work and in the growing crops that he would not take if he was simply working for wages; therefore when under proper precautions and guidance it is often the very best system that can be practiced. But to turn land, team and feed for the team, and tools over to the average negro without supervision on the part of the land owner and permit the tenant to farm according to his own sweet will and judgment is to court disaster and breed poor and unreliable labor. It seems to me that no good farmer or sane person could expect aught but failure from any such practice.

TENANT SYSTEM HURTFUL.

Among the essentials in successful agriculture are brains, push and enterprise, none of which we find in the tenant system spoken of. Under this system the tenants became disappointed, discouraged, shiftless and thriftless. The farms under their management having run down, the lands grown poorer and the owners often in debt for supplies furnished. Both the landlord and tenant agreed that farming did not pay, and they or their children moved to town looking for easier jobs and better pay. Away with the system. Let intelligence and business methods be the controlling factor on the farm and the tenant will soon see the change for the better and be content to stay on the farm.

One other thing: as the ideals of negroes advance, and we as a people are trying to inculcate in them higher ideals, they want better homes and more pleasant surroundings. This is perfectly natural and commendable. Are we meeting their legitimate requirements in this respect? In some sections I have no doubt they are met and in others I know they are not.

GOOD TENANT HOUSES.

The negro with any degree of aspiration has a certain degree of pride and likes a comfortable home and pleasant surroundings. With such a home ties and attachments for the place will be formed that will go a long way toward settling the moving mania and in this way very materially help labor conditions. Of course there are exceptions to this rule as there are some who have no appreciation nor gratitude for any kindness that may be shown them.

Ceiled and painted or whitewashed houses of comfortable dimension, a garden spot, a few fruit trees that are to be known as theirs, some shade trees and a few flowers would exert a wonderful influence in retaining the labor on the farm. Give them as wholesome advice about their home affairs as we would our white neighbor, and encourage them in beautifying and improving their homes by planting out fruit trees, shrubbery and flowers around their houses. However, for obvious reasons, I should discourage the raising of chickens,

pigs, etc., by them. They at least might become a source of annoyance and trouble.

IMPROVED MACHINERY.

Another question that can be considered in connection with this is improved farm implements and machinery. If we can make the two blades with less manual labor and with less expense than we made the one blade with, we might well be termed self-benefactors. This is just what improved farm machinery and implements are intended for. The self-binder in the wheat field has taken the place of the cradle, not only is the work done more quickly and easily, but more economically with machinery than by hand. In many sections the riding plow and riding cultivators are taking the places of the old style turn plows and cultivators.

Every farmer must be his own judge as to whether his farm is adapted to improved machinery and implements or not and then he can govern himself accordingly. But where they can be used to advantage, the present scarcity of labor should prove a strong argument for their adoption. That is the only way that I see by which we can materially increase the working capacity of our labor as now constituted.

DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN GOOD LABOR AND POOR LABOR.

There is one other almost unanimous practice among our farmers that in my opinion needs correction. That is a lack of discrimination between the painstaking, efficient and industrious hand and the ordinary or trifling laborer in regard to the wages paid each. A laborer is a laborer with most of us, and we pay all alike. There is no class of people that are treated in this way that I know of except the common laborer. I contend that a man should be paid according to his work. The practice would be an inducement to the industrial and efficient worker to continue as such and might act as an inducement to those belonging to the other class to improve their ways so as to get better wages.

I know that when laborers are worked in gangs that a boss usually supervises them and drives the careless and lazy so as to do as much work as the best hands, thereby compelling them to earn their wages. But with the average farmer that is not at all practicable. I believe the change suggested is worth considering.

THE EMPLOYER.

In the management of labor very much depends upon the employer or superintendent. In my opinion it requires fully as much good judgment and tact to successfully manage labor as it does to drive a balking horse or a yoke of unruly steers, and we all know with how much more seeming ease some people can manage these than others can. Just so with labor. Some people have the tact of getting very much more and better work out of laborers than others can get, and at the same time to do it in such a way as to make it a pleasure to the laborer to put forth his best efforts. This can often be done by judicious praise given at just the right time.

It is unnecessary to tell a negro that he is as black as the ace of spades, for he can look in a glass and see that for himself, but if he does his work well and satisfactorily I think it well to tell him so in words or actions and generally in both ways. However, I do not advise indiscriminate praise. Give it only when it is merited, and on the other hand, if after showing one how to do a thing, he still persists in doing it the wrong way or in not doing it satisfactorily, tell him pleasantly but plainly that his work is not satisfactory, and point out in what particular it is not pleasing to you. If then he does not mend his ways let him go just as soon as you can dispense with his services and tell him just why you let him go.

Whether a life is noble or ignoble depends not on the calling which is adopted, but on the spirit in which it is followed. The humblest life may be noble, while that of the most powerful monarch or the greatest genius may be contemptible. —Sir John Lubbock.

More Suggestions as to the Labor Problem.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

I was looking over my back numbers of The Progressive Farmer to-day, and was really surprised at the large amount of valuable information they contain. I would not part with them for more than a year's subscription.

One article I re-read was along the line of securing white laborers to replace the colored class in the State. It seems that little progress has been made in this line. In fact, the officials who have interested themselves in this question, say settlers seem to go anywhere else but here. Now, whatever other causes there may be for this, I think I see one, namely, the low wages paid here. I call to mind the experience of a young man who worked in Missouri last year at \$1.50 per day. He came to North Carolina and taught school through the winter, then sought some honorable employment in the spring. He was obliged to go to work at 50 cents per day.

To one seeking only the best wages such an experience is hard to forget. Better pay and shorter hours will keep more hands on the farm.

I wish some one who knows would inform us what is the value of pine ashes for fertilizer, or soil improver. Are they good for strawberry plants, and do they contain as much lime as hardwood ashes?

Having lived more or less in four different States, I am led to believe that the Old North State is hard to beat. Soil and climate are both favorable to agriculture of almost every type. We, however, need a few more "book farmers," or those who use both hands and brains. The latter is the best fertilizer known.

E. R. ALLEN.

Stanly Co., N. C.

Milching.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

A recent farmers' bulletin gives the results of mulching vegetables and fruits at one of the agricultural experimental stations. Mulching, by means of a layer of litter applied to the ground to retard evaporation, is much used as a substitute for cultivation in summer, to conserve moisture; and also serves as a winter covering for small fruits, to protect them from frost. Straw, marsh hay and leaves are the common materials used, in layers four to six inches deep. It has been found better to cultivate early spring vegetables, like lettuce, than to mulch them; but with crops that require frequent cultivation throughout the season, such as cabbage, tomatoes, etc., mulching is found more effective and cheaper than working. The station tests indicate that it is unwise to mulch drilled onions, lettuce or sweet corn; but with potatoes, beans, cucumbers, cabbage and tomatoes, very favorable results were secured. In many cases, mulching is better than thorough cultivation throughout the summer. The best effects are obtained from this method in dry seasons. The system of mulching orchards by cutting the grass and allowing it to lie where it falls, has been successfully used in Ohio. It is claimed that all the results which are supposed to come from good tillage and cover crops have been secured in this way. Mulching is also valuable to delay the ripening of strawberries.

W. H. TODD.

Raising Pickles.

Several years ago one of Heinz's men discovered that there were great possibilities of raising pickles in Bladen and Robeson counties, along the Carolina Central road. This section now furnishes the Heinz factories with vast quantities of cucumbers for pickling. The Clarkton Express tells us that the Heinz agent closed operations there last week for the season and paid off Saturday. It says that those who planted cucumbers were more pleased with results than they were last year, as the seasons were better. Some made good money."